Herskovits & Herskovits R-5 (1933-1935) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Surinam

"Perhaps the women were wrong. She may not be a woman yet."

"*Ma kyé!*" Angita exclaimed. It seemed he knew better.

And there was the woman Amasina. She wore as many armlets and anklets of brass as the shy dancer, as many as the wife of the bassia of S'ei, whom the gods had prospered. Her cloths were of the finest, and in colors which were most often of yellow and blue stripes, with a thread of black interwoven, and another of twisted red and white. She was good-looking, but in her manner there was no smoldering challenge and no undue reserve. With ease she went from one group to another, and the women treated her neither with too much familiarity nor with restraint.

Amasina felt at ease, too, with the white people. In the bush they had an explanation for this feeling of well-being with strangers. If a man and a woman were both born on the same day, they did not get on very well together, for they were both apt to have the same powers to grasp things which came within the province of the gods who also had come into the world on that day. Such a man and woman would at once perceive each other's mistakes or would be given to speaking continual warnings to each other. But there were days which were especially congenial affinities for marriages, and even friendships. These, we were led to see, were days which represented a male and female deity in the Bush Negro pantheon, whose mating had brought well-being to themselves and the living world.

"You and Amasina like each other, sí," they said in the village, and this friendship had a sequel of importance for us.

One late afternoon we were sitting with the women talking about the gods. Dida said the white on her body was for her god Kesekia. Chief And'u had washed her for her god when he was here in the village, and tomorrow she would dance. Kesekia, she said, was a Vodu god, who had come to her from the French shore. When he came to her, he spoke tongues; he knew French.

"Tomorrow they will play the agida drum, and I will put a kerchief on my head tied so," she said, showing how she

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

It is indulged in as naturally as the other bodily functions.

"Marriage" is a convenient term for describing cohabitation among the Djukas, but it must be remembered that to them marriage is a purely economic institution. There is little ceremony. No one objects to getting married, because divorce is instantaneous and easy. The bonds of marriage are loose, and adultery, to use our harsh term, is customary.

Courting consists in presenting the prospective bride with elaborate wood carvings of useful implements. This wood carving has been developed by the Djukas to a high point of artistic perfection, as can be seen from the illustrative specimens, of which more will be said later. The approaching marriage is not looked upon as a departure from the maternal group; it is simply an arrangement for providing the man with a cook and the woman with children. The marriage of a captain or a Granman differs in no wise from any other; no especial care is taken of his bride.

We encountered two varieties of the process of choosing a husband. In the first, the girl has little to say, her husband being selected for her by her parents. In the second and more frequent practice the woman marries the man of her own choice, the parents making sure that the intended husband is a good provider. But since every Djuka buck is trained to the jungle crafts from childhood, this requirement can almost be taken for granted.

The husband marries frequently. He may marry outside of his village, or outside of his lo, but never outside of the tribe. Marriage requires a bride price, consisting of pieces of

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

881 have a last look at the child's penis, as they will never see it again. Then the boy is proclaimed a man, and given clothes.

So far as could be observed, there is no circumcision of either the male or female, although such mutilations are indulged in by West African tribes in the region from which the Djukas came. The girls wear only the *coyo*, or a larger cloth known as *pangi*, until their first menstruation, when their mothers give them cloths. This is done in private. Menstruating women are required to leave their homes and retire
841 to a separate hut situated outside the village on a by-path; they may not return until three days after the period is over. Under no condition are they allowed to go to the provision fields during this time.

584 At the age of about sixteen or seventeen the children are
[582] ready to be married. Sometimes they are betrothed in infancy, and occasionally a pregnant woman will betroth her child before it is born, conditionally, of course, upon its sex. Once the child is betrothed the ceremony must take place,
[754] otherwise the disappointed prospective mate will call down a *kunu*, or curse, on the entire perjured family, and they will all die. The pubescent child does not look forward to marriage as time for leaving its family, nor is marriage an
[581] initiation into sex relations. For these two reasons, getting
[549] married is not a serious step, and there is little illegitimacy because there is no reason for objecting to a marriage.

858 Youths must remain standing until their elders invite them
576 to be seated. It is customary for older people to receive much
888 respectful attention, for the older people are the sources of tradition and authority

/509 cont./
October 1958 – January 1959), expeditions whose principal aim was the sociological study of these populations.

/510/

Social Structure and Way of Life

10/ The Boni Refugee Blacks. The Boni are one of the above-mentioned [175] tribes of the Refugee Blacks, reconstituted in the course of the eighteenth century by rebel African slaves who escaped from Surinam plantations (Dutch Guiana).

[131] [161] These tribes (Saramaka, Djuka, Paramaka, Boni) live for the most part along the rivers of the interior of Surinam. They group together a total of 25,000 persons.

161 [144] With very rare exceptions, the Refugee Blacks are pure Africans. These populations, vigorous and well adapted to the country, have experienced in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a remarkable demographic increase, attested to by all the authors. Descended from small rebel groups which could not have contained more than a few hundred women, they are now estimated at more than 25,000 persons.

162 103 [161] The Boni of the Upper Maroni, the subject of the present study, number approximately 800, of whom 660 are on the French bank (the villages of Boniville, l'Enfant Perdu, Loka, Asisi, Papaïton, and Kormotibo) and 140 on the Surinam bank (the village of Kotika). These villages were established long ago.

613 621 769 Each of them groups together a matrilineage, i.e., the descendants in the uterine line of one single founding ancestress; certain villages know their genealogy in its entirety back to this ancestress, who must have lived at the end of the eighteenth century. The members of the lineage are united by the cult of the [622] ancestors, which binds them firmly to their natal village and to their land. The social system is based essentially on this cult, [793] the chief of the village being above all the priest of the ancestors.

581 Strictly speaking, there is no marriage, but only an acknowledged concubinage which entails neither a contract between the

/310 cont./

relatives, nor any power of the man over the woman, nor even household cohabitation. The man and the woman each reside in the village of their maternal kin. The man goes to live with his wife from time to time, providing her with the imported commodities that she needs, notably salt, kerosene, cloth, and utensils, and felling trees for the clearings which she will exploit for the benefit of the household.

Divorce is entirely free. Unions are not very stable, mainly on account of the woman. Members of women are divorced four to five times during their lives.

The grand man, chief of the tribe, exercises over the Boni a power which is more religious than political.

The Boni are a pirogue-people. For more than a century they have been living by using their canoes for the benefit of gold-seekers and exploiting miners. The decline of gold extraction is depriving them more and more of their traditional resources. Some of them are emigrating temporarily to the coastal lumberyards. But all of them remain faithful to their villages and to their customs.

/311/

The Oayana Indians (Roucouyennes /Rucuyen/). These Indians of the Caribe /Carib/ ethnic group have had only a few direct contacts with European civilization and still represent without alteration the human type which populated Guiana before the arrival of the Europeans. On encountering the Refugee Blacks, the Indians of the Guianese forest have been steadily and rapidly declining. Estimated at 30,000 at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Indians of French Guiana are now no more than about a thousand. In addition there must be included in this number 700 persons (Galibi and Arawak) who have been protected by their habitat in the savannas of the coast where malaria is less deadly than in the interior.

The accounts of travelers and the censuses made notably in 1730, 1759, 1787, and 1815 allow one to follow with precision this destruction of the autochthonous population since the first settlement of the Europeans in Guiana (2).

2. Dr. André Sausse, op. cit., pp. 67-98.

601 /34 cont./ They continue to use the terms wagi. ay. may even after the break-up of a marriage, so that they are in frequent usage. As for the woman herself, they say so So-and-so in speaking to her, as to a sister.

581 Marriage. The conceptions of the Refugee Blacks on this subject are remarkable. Marriage in the African sense of the term, understood as a contract between two groups of relatives, does not exist among them. The union of the man and woman does not involve any sort of contract between their groups of relatives and consequently entails no matrimonial compensation. /35/ The Refugee Blacks are the only African Negro population to our knowledge whose customs do not involve any form of "dowry" either in money or in kind.

582 Family life in the sense that we understand it does not exist; as we shall see further on, marriage is forbidden between people of the same lineage, which implies that the husband and wife live in different villages. The man builds a house for his wife in her native village, but he does not come to live with her; he makes visits of several days to her as to his other wives, in the course of which he furnishes her with the imported objects (salt, kerosene, cloth, etc.) she needs, lends her his aid for heavy chores, while, for her part, she turns over to him the products of the clearing. The rest of the time he lives as a bachelor in his mother's village where he builds his own house. If he is very attached to his wife, he can come to reside with her and can even succeed without great difficulty in bringing her to live in his own village; but few couples take advantage of this option, for the man and wife prize their independence above everything else.

593 The life of the man and of the wife remain entirely separate and their union has more the character of a temporary association founded on material interests than that of a marriage; the family life of each one remains entirely centered around his or her matrilineage.

/35 cont./

593 This organization, compared with what is found in the greater part of Africa, is very advantageous for the wife, who [581] enjoys total independence. But against this she has great instability of unions.

581 601 "The union of man and woman has so little of the character of a marriage that in the Boni language no word exists which means, strictly speaking, "husband" or "wife." They say: mi ũni anga X = "I live with So-and-so.

1174 591 How has the social and matrimonial system of the Refugee Blacks been set up? One could believe that one of the systems of western Africa was purely and simply transposed, but this is not the case at all. In this domain as in that of beliefs, the ancestors of the Refugee Blacks elaborated an original synthesis out of numerous sources.

The African nations from which the rebels issued were certainly, in large part if not in the majority, patrilineal. This is especially the case of the Fon of Dahomey, from whom have been borrowed important cultural elements, especially the principal rites of possession. The matrilineal ones all conceded patrilocal residence, that is, the wife's leaving her village and settling in her husband's village.

[195] The 18th-century rebels, the archives attest, included a heavy percentage of "salt-water Negroes," born on African soil; such, for example, was Codio Coromantin, one of Boni's lieutenants; those who had not been born in Africa had, for the most part, been instructed in an African tradition by a father or uncle. One can be sure that once having attained freedom they sought to organize their villages according to the family custom by which they had been brought up, that is, to set up, some a patrilineal and patrilocal society, others a matrilineal society /36/ but with [643] patrilocal residence. We know for example that Boni had chosen his son Agosu as his successor.

/37 cont../

583 591 (this was especially the case with the Afi and Tolna lineages cited above), that does not entail any compensation. It is contrary to custom and disapproved of, but if the wife absolutely insists on leaving her kin she is free to do it. Nothing can be claimed from her husband's lineage.

The usual interpretation of matrimonial compensation, regarded as a mechanism for exchange of women among groups, thus does not seem valid here. If a woman leaves a Boni lineage for good to go and found a family, for example among the Djuka, her descendants are lost to the lineage without any possibility of compensation. Yet this society so deeply rooted in African soil does not make provision for any allowance or payment in such a case.

613 779 [829] Things are clearer if the lineage is considered not as an effective material grouping but as a spiritual community subject to the same religious law. In the thought of the Refugee Blacks, the fundamental religious tie which joins the individual to his ancestors in uterine line cannot be broken whatever anyone does.

[591] [784] Wherever she may go, the emigrant woman remains a member of the spiritual community; she remains, she and her children, subject too the same kunu. Nor can this religious tie be transferred from the maternal kin group.

• 581 583 Understood thus, marriage breaks no spiritual tie, creates none; it thus affords no reason for any compensation.

000 These considerations show that the African "dowry" as conceived byy patrilineal societies is not only a mechanism for the exchange of women among materially constituted groups. It can also have as its end, without those concerned even being aware of it, to compensate the spiritual community of the lineage for the loss of the children the woman will bear, their passage to another cult.

Schmaltz--301 K-5 (1948-1956) 1961 SRS Bush Negroes SRS Boni

/137 cont./

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She bequeathed thus her guardianship over Fintiman (46 years) to the grand man
over Kifimemi (43 years) to Samalobi, the grand man's brother
over ○ Kulina (38 years) to Samalobi
over ○ Eliana (40 years) to the grand man.

But she bequeathed nothing concerning her last two children, ○ Balloom (35 years) and ○ Maria (28) respectively brought up by △ Malobi, Bêmi's husband, and by ○ Aliki, an old woman of the Dyu lineage. It will behoove these two persons to bequeath, at their death, the spiritual tutelage over the girls they have raised.

Marriage

581

It is for lack of a more appropriate word that we use the word "marriage" with respect to the Refugee Blacks; the word concubinage is unpleasant to use; nevertheless it fits better what the union of a man and woman represents in the thought of the Refugee Blacks as in their social life.

In the organization we have just described no stable and permanent tie between a man and woman is implied.

831

Actually the Refugee Blacks, with rare exceptions, appear to be incapable of associating a strong and lasting emotional tie with sexual union. They are unstable in this respect, always in search of new adventures and not settling on any one. Their unions are more inspired by material concern (getting the

/137 cont./

831 necessary food) than by a sentimental motive. It is very rare to meet among them the appearance of sincere and lasting love for a woman; that is sometimes seen, but it is the exception.

562 It is not enough to say that they have few emotional feelings with respect to women. In the conversations heard in the evening around the campfires a deep contempt is expressed on this subject; they even speak of the Boni women as of a foreign and almost enemy nation; they consider them besides as half irresponsible. This attitude shows through in the custom concern- [684] ing adultery, which decrees that the lover be beaten but not the wife.

•581 Among the Refugee Blacks marriage is in fact a contract of maintenance between a man and woman, which provides for the execution of such-and-such work by the one for the benefit of the other, and for the wife the obligation to be faithful.

[584] This contract can be cancelled unilaterally without any sort of [765] indemnity. It does not directly involve the relatives of the spouses; it involves them only in case of the death of one spouse, for the surviving spouse must /138/ put up with the subservience [613] of mourning. It is principally for this reason that a marriage must be officially known by both lineages, and that a divorce must be proclaimed without delay.

592 Exogamy. Marriage is forbidden between persons of the same
613 lineage. In expressing this prohibition the Refugee Blacks
614 employ the word bee (lineage in the restricted sense) and not the word lo.

613 As we have seen in studying the situation of the various lineages, the various Boni kin groups follow different rules in this regard:

--The Dju lineage, which forms only one single group from the genealogical point of view, does not allow marriage between its members;

/149 cont./

836 684 not done." He advises Doni above all to remit to the girl the payment of her akka, namely two camisas, a string of white beads which she will wear on her left wrist, and a bottle of syrup which she will offer to her akka while drinking it. Doni does not bother to face the mother and does not intend to see the girl again; it is his sister Maria who will attend to the errand.

That done, the mother will accept the fait accompli and will not show her anger. She will wait for the payment.

587 836 One also hears talk rather often of the clandestine consummation of a properly arranged marriage, the engaged couple wishing thus to force the hand of their guardians and obtain their freedom sooner.

587 Remarriage of widows or divorcées. It does not give rise to any payment, but the marriage proposal is made to the woman's uncles and the head of her lineage in the same form as for a girl. In such a case it is no longer a question of asking for an authorization (a man would have to have the worst reputation for the woman's lineage to refuse the marriage) but to obtain the benediction of the ancestors on the household. Moreover, it is (613) very important for the heads of both lineages to be notified of this marriage, for in case of the death of husband or wife the other will have to bear the weight of the mourning.

• 581 Women are guided in their choice by sensual attraction but largely also by self-interest. They take care to marry a man who has, as it is said among us, some future, a position. The owners of outboard motors do not fail to pass at reduced speed by the villages in order to be admired by the women.

Men who have a reputation for "working hard" (for work is the sole wealth in Boni country) are frequently chosen by girls even though they may have one or two wives already.

/Till cont./

593 [591] [163] Among the Refugee Blacks some very devoted couples are seen, who spend their whole lives together and who, in their old age, have completely united their destinies, living in the same house, either in the woman's village or the man's: for example, in the village of Lapé Tabiki, Boto and his wife Assimani, in 1952 aged about 70 years, together for 45 years and having had eight children. But such cases are exceptional. Besides, they are not admired and held up as an example as one might believe; this man and this woman suited each other, they remained together; if some day they no longer get along, they will divorce, that is all.

595 Polygamy. Polygamy in the African sense of the term, that is, the simultaneous maintenance of several regular households, is exceptional among the Refugee Blacks because of their mode of living:

[433] [511] --The wife is practically entirely dependent on her husband; an economy based mainly on wage earning and involving a relatively high standard of living makes it impossible for most men to maintain more than one household;

[461] --Even if a man had sizable financial means at his disposal, he could scarcely maintain more than two households; for it is not acceptable, at least nowadays, for him to have done by others the customary chores: clearings, boats, house.

169 595 On January 1, 1958 out of 134 men over 20 years old in the villages on the French bank, whose lives were well known to us, there were:

Men maintaining three households	4	3%
" " two households	18	13%
" " one household	104	77%
[589] Bachelors, widowers, or recent divorcés	11	8%
	134	100% /sic/

/151 cont./

595 Sticking to statistics, one could say that the Refugee Blacks are monogamous in the proportion of 65 per cent. But
581 it is an apparent monogamy for unions are not stable; their
586 average duration is about ten years; in fact the Refugee Blacks are practicing polygamy over a period of time.

595 A man who takes another wife apologizes to the first and gives her a liter of tafia, asking her to live on good terms with
[584] the co-wife. A certain number of wives do not accept co-wives and get divorced.

589 Most men have had, in general, four or five wives
582 successively. Most of the time these marriages have been
163 broken by the wife. /152/

Example 5... (65 years old in 1957) had at least seven wives:

-- Nanay (Dip. II) †	1 child	divorced
Baakauman (K) †	3 children	•
1 Paramaka woman	1 child dead	•
Saumè (Dip. I)	1 child	•
Paata (Boniville)	no children	•
Emma (Asisi-Aw.)	no children	•
Masé (K)	•	marriage extant in 1958

Kwami (50 years old in 1958) had four wives:

-- Apinda (Asisi)	no children	divorced
Saayé (Dip. I)	several children	•
Do (Lapé)	1 child dead	•
Noémi (Asisi-Aw.)	1 child	marriage extant in 1958

159
582 Example of the family life of G... (50 years old in 1958).
About 1935 G... married M... (Kotika), a serious-minded and
159 intelligent woman who was very attached to him. Neverthe-
839 less, about the same time he had a clandestine affair with S....,
[847] classificatory sister of M... whom he made pregnant (abortion),

/153 cont./

(584) (582) (622) with repudiation in case of a second offense. The rule is to repudiate her under pain of ridicule.

839 In 1951 G.... of Kanika village, was informed that his wife A.... of Asini village, 25 years old, was deceiving him with a boy of the same age named K.... The first time he encountered K in a village he took issue with him; K.... confessed without difficulty. G.... delivered a strong punch which threw him to the ground, and that was all. He did not administer any punishment to his wife but immediately let her know that he was repudiating her. Some time after, K... asked to be reconciled with him. He asked his pardon and gave him a bottle of tafia (this is obligatory for reconciliation). Since, the two men have again been friends.

(584) (586) (597) (431)

It also happens that the grand man levies a more or less stiff fine on the guilty man.

839 (586) According to the elders, adultery was rare in former times. If a woman was tired of her husband, she divorced him openly, but she did not deceive him. Nowadays it seems to be rather frequent.

586 Divorce. The Refugee Blacks divorce each other as easily as they join together; in general it is the woman who decides to break up the union because she finds her husband too poor, too lazy, or simply because she wants to change. /154/

In the case of divorce the woman keeps all that her husband has given to her or made for her (utensils, house, boat), but of course the man keeps all his own belongings; this rupture changes nothing about the possession of property since no object was owned jointly.

• 581 The rule is the following: at the time of the marriage the man puts down symbolically several personal objects (fabrics, utensils) in the woman's home. As long as these objects are in her home the marriage remains in force, the wife is held to fidelity or at the very least, if there is adultery, it is regarded as such and entails the sanctions related above.

/134 cont./

as such and entails the sanction related above. But the wife has the absolute right, even in her husband's absence, to break the contract unilaterally by taking back to the head of her husband's lineage the objects left with her. From this moment on, no more can be said to her, she is no longer guilty of adultery, and she can take another husband forthwith; in case of the first husband's death she will not have to stand the weight of the mourning. All that her husband has made for her: house, boat, etc... is kept without counterpart.

No Boni leaving on a three-month trip is sure of finding his wife again. He may very well find another man installed in his place, officially, without his being able to say anything. As for those who leave for a long time, this is practically a certainty.

This is a misfortune which however they take philosophically, thinking above all of the work furnished for nothing. What concerns them most is not to be deceived clandestinely, for the final result is the same: they are practically obliged to repudiate the wife in such a case, for it is unworthy of a man to forgive, and in addition they will be the laughing-stock of the population.

Several of our boatmen made the following speech to their wives at the time of leaving for a two-months' tour: "If you have enough of me in my absence, if you cannot wait for me, go and take my belongings to the house of such-and-such a brother; I shall not be angry and will not do anything to you on my return."

Custom is so favorable to the women that practically nothing guarantees the private contract made between the man and woman at the time of marriage. Since this contract is essentially founded on a material association, the man cutting the clearing and the woman farming it, one might believe that the woman would be held to fulfilling her contract even in case of the marriage's breaking up, but there is nothing of the sort.

Ethnol--ZY K-5 (1948-1974) 1981 498 Sub Negros 586
Boni

/136 cont./

If children are born of these irregular liaisons, the mother takes care to know with certainty who the father is, for if there were any doubt, the child, respecting a *kina* which would not be his own, would contract leprosy. On this subject the Boni have a remarkable belief: they think that it is the first man with whom a woman has had relations after the end of a menstrual period who is likely to make her pregnant.

These adventures always involve gifts in kind (cloth, jewels); so the men who have the most success with women are always short of money.

A woman who has lived thus in notorious fashion has a little more difficulty than another in finding another husband, but if she is young and winsome she succeeds.

Prostitution as such is very rare in Boni country, and the women who give themselves over to it openly (three or four for all the villages on the French bank) have generally left the tribe to settle in the gold miners' villages. Dissoluteness is not considered dishonorable by the Refugee Blacks when it is carried on within the tribe and when it has no other purpose but pleasure; but prostitution is judged shameful.

Except for these few prostitutes, we have never heard it said that a Boni woman had relations with a European; on this point tribal discipline is observed with extreme rigor.

Conclusion. The average duration of marriages, which was from 15 to 20 years for the preceding generation, tends to become shorter and can be estimated nowadays at about ten years. In spite of this evolution, the stability of marriages among the Refugee Blacks remains noticeably greater than that observed among the black populations of South America. Among them is not seen the form of prostitution so widespread in South America, the supported mistress who does not work and who lives entirely at the expense of her successive lovers.

/138 cont./

169 784 old woman of 90, A.... who died in Asut in January, 1957. Having lived with Creoles in her youth, she had come back to live in her native village for at least 30 years and had never given occasion for any unfavorable remark. Nevertheless, upon her death it appeared that she had witi.

791 829 199 Attitude toward Christianity. The Refugee Blacks, who are acquainted better than one might believe with the conceptions of the populations in the midst of whom they live, have a clear feeling of the relationship which exists between their metaphysical and moral conceptions and those of Christianity. They think they worship the same god as the Christians, in a completely different way but just as sound. They have no animosity whatever toward the Catholic and Protestant clergy, and most of them agree willingly to wearing crosses or medals. But they have not the least intention of abandoning their beliefs for that. They do not perceive the contradiction and do not understand that people might want to oblige them to choose.

[779]

851 191 165 799 [688] [693] [784] Like the Creole gold miners, they attach great importance to baptism, considered as an Obia protective against the dangers of the bush. On Christmas, 1957 they were strongly impressed by the accidental death of a Djuka Christian living at the Kotika school. He refused to observe mourning for his wife according to the custom of the Refugee Blacks, and used to go to drink in the cabarets of the Creole villages. On Christmas evening, when drunk, he drowned himself. That was attributed to a suprahuman punishment. We heard /199/ the following reflection on this subject: "He was baptized and he drowned himself just the same. That is therefore not worth the trouble."

61 581 591 Actually, the matrilineal structure of the Refugee Blacks and their conception of marriage form an irreducible cleavage, which appears immediately as soon as one leaves the metaphysical conceptions to pass to the plane of practical living.

G:Mureaux--300 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 582 Bush Negroes 582 Bosi

/139 cont./

581 The Refugee Blacks change their attitude immediately as soon as one speaks to them about marriage. Men and women are unanimous in considering marriage as an intolerable violation of individual freedom and as a tie without purpose; they talk about it with veritable indignation, even having the feeling of an offense against morality.

789 794

Cults of Possession

[191] The phenomena of possession are extremely frequent among the Blacks of America (possession by saints or inspiration by the Holy Spirit among the Blacks of Brazil and the United States, vaudouism in Haiti). With the Refugee Blacks they [191] make up the very base of religious life to the point of being the normal means of communication between the gods and men; they have profound effects on all social life.

The cults of possession practiced by the Refugee Blacks of Guiana differ from those of the Blacks of Brazil and Haiti and do not appear to be directly connected with the African cults which have been described.

[128] We shall give here only very concise information about the ritual of these cults and we shall mainly try to show their place in relation to the institutions of the Refugee Blacks, and their functioning.

789 Possession is believed to be the entrance into a man of a suprahuman entity (divinity, spirit of an ancestor) which, during a variable length of time generally rather short (a few minutes to several hours), uses the body of this man and expresses itself through his mouth. They say that the man has become the horse - hasi - of the divinity. They also say: "Such-and-such a divinity entered his head." The possessed person is called [114] gadu mE (gadu umE for a woman). This word has been translated improperly as "priest" in the first works treating of the Refugee Blacks.